

**Legal Name of Organization:** Tennessee Higher Education Commission

**Common Name of Organization:** THEC

**Lumina Foundation Issued Grant Number:** 6701

**Grant start date:** 12/1/2009      **Grant end date:** 11/30/2013

**Progress on Goals, Activities and Timelines:**

• **List the major objectives of the project as outlined in your proposal**

Lumina Adult Student Initiative

- Implement and evaluate adult centered reforms with consideration given to ideas that emerged from the MOA-TN Adult Strategies Group and MOA-TN Policy Audit in order to increase the number of adults with a college degree

Job Projection and Supply and Demand Analysis

- Examine job market trends and supply/ demand dynamics for the service area, state, and region across degree level and major area
- Include high demand fields in the higher education funding formula, Performance Funding, Master Plan, academic program approval, and distinct institutional mission statements
- Help institutions target new programs geared toward adults seeking retraining

Master Plan/ Funding Formula/ Performance Funding

- Pursue statewide agenda for increasing degree completion
- Focus on productivity and efficiency
- Include adult student completion goals

Strategic Communications and Engagement

- Build support for policy changes in higher education funding formula and Performance Funding
- Engage local leaders and media with roundtables and regional data
- Assist in institutional efforts to reach adult students and promote job opportunities for adults as indicated by Job Market Projections

• **Describe major grant milestones and the progress you have made toward achieving these objectives within your proposed timeline**

Lumina Adult Student Initiative

The Adult Student Initiative subcontracts are in progress with six selected institutions as part of the two selected consortia. An advisory panel was established to define the subcontract criteria and selected the participants in April 2010. The selection process required a longer deliberation period than planned as a result of the change from community colleges to two institutional consortia.

An adult student web portal on [www.collegefortn.org](http://www.collegefortn.org) is under construction after being recently included in a contract between the XAP Corporation and GEAR-UP TN. The MOA-TN Adult Strategies Group and TN Business Roundtable will be consulted for input on the content of the website and a review of best practices in adult specific college access portals has already been completed.

Job Projection and Supply and Demand Analysis

This project is in progress and the final report will be completed before the July 29, 2010 THEC meeting and used to inform the Master Plan, public higher education funding formula, and Performance Funding. THEC staff met with the University of Tennessee Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) and TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDOL) in

December 2009 to design the Job Projection and Supply and Demand Study; the Memorandum of Understanding was completed in the following months. THEC provided UT CBER with student level completion data, which they have matched to workforce projections from the TDOL. The results will also be made publicly available on the TN Accountability Dashboard Website. UT CBER has provided progress reports to several groups including to the Master Plan Committee and THEC.

#### Master Plan/ Funding Formula/ Performance Funding

The Master Plan Committee was convened to draft a public agenda for higher education including goals, strategies, and measures. The Committee- composed of 33 representatives from institutions, system staff and board members, THEC staff and board members, faculty senate leadership, the business community, legislature, and Governor's office- is reviewing a conceptual draft of the Master Plan. After receiving feedback from the Committee and a wider audience of stakeholders, the Higher Education Master Plan 2010-2015 will be approved at the THEC meeting July 29, 2010.

The Funding Formula Review Committee is composed of 24 members and was developed to create the formulae for public universities, community colleges, and Technology Centers. The group began with the requirements of the Complete College Tennessee Act (CCTA), which directed the creation of an "outcomes based" funding formula that takes into consideration institutional distinctiveness and includes several suggested metrics. The Committee, after consultation with a wider constituency through member feedback and listening tours, has agreed upon the broad framework for the formula and is currently working on precise metric definitions and institutional weighting based on distinct mission profiles and statements. The final funding formula will be approved at the THEC meeting July 29, 2010 and will be used to recommend FY 2011-12 allocations.

The Performance Funding Task Force has agreed upon a framework of institutional metrics to focus on quality and productivity and is now defining specific metrics and assigning point values. The final Performance Funding structure will be approved at the THEC meeting July 29, 2010. Separate from Performance Funding, an Academic Affairs Committee was also convened consisting of academic officers from the institution and system offices. The Committee oversees the implementation of the academic affairs portions of CCTA including articulation and transfer and suggests the method for measuring progress in relation to CCTA for the Master Plan.

#### Strategic Communications and Engagement

The higher education community participated in Governor's Bredesen's higher education task force as well as the special legislative session held in January 2010 which concluded with the passage of CCTA. Progress on MOA-TN activities was provided to various stakeholder groups including state and system higher education boards, Master Plan, funding formula, Performance Funding, Adult Strategies Group, and Academic Affairs group membership throughout the spring.

The contract with the TN Business Roundtable to coordinate the outreach efforts for higher education productivity is substantively complete and proceeding through state purchasing channels. It includes a series of high-profile convenings expected later this summer and fall. The TN Business Roundtable (TNBR) has participated in the MOA Planning Activities and Policy Audit as well as the Master Plan Committee to provide feedback from the business community. TNBR also has worked with MOA-TN to begin creating localized materials and planning a dissemination strategy which will provide outreach and information to the business community, legislature, and media. Tennessee's state advisor has also assisted TNBR in applying strategies being used to build and sustain business engagement in education from across the country.

THEC staff attended the SHEEO/ NCES Network Data Conference and IPEDS Workshop to inform the TN Accountability Dashboard Website, which will house the assessment portion of the MOA-TN work as well as for the broader scope of CCTA productivity activities. THEC staff also attended the National Governor's Association Adult Degree Completion meeting in March 2010. The ideas shared during the NGA meeting will contribute to the Lumina Adult Student Initiative subcontracts.

#### Project Evaluation and Administration

Christine Luce, the MOA Grant Programs Director and the state's designee to attend bi-annual evaluation reflection meetings out-of-state, was hired in January 2010. Tennessee State University Associate Dean of the College Education, Dr. Christon Arthur, has been hired as the local evaluator and his contract is proceeding through state purchasing channels. SPEC conducted an in-state evaluation orientation in March 2010 in which the Grant Director, Local Evaluator, and MOA-TN State Team participated. Both the Local Evaluator and Grant Director attended the first national evaluation meeting in March 2010. MOA-TN posted the eight core metrics and Tennessee specific additional metrics to the Knowledge Collaborative on May 28, 2010. Tennessee's interim fiscal report is being submitted as a spreadsheet attachment with this report on June 15, 2010.

The TN Accountability Website, a web-based dashboard to track MOA-TN goals and progress publicly, is under development. The accountability metrics included will align with the Master Plan, funding formula, and Performance Funding program; these metrics will be approved in July 2010.

- **Note where activities have differed from the initial plan**

The Lumina Adult Student Initiative subcontracts were changed, with HCM approval, from being awarded to three to five community colleges to two consortia encompassing a university, community college, and technology center, for six total institutions. The advisory panel charged to select the awarded institutions determined that consortia could more comprehensively address the recommendations of the MOA-TN Adult Strategies Group and MOA-TN Policy Audit, as discussed in the grant proposal. In addition, the advisory panel determined that the political environment after the passage of CCTA and the cooperation between institutions built through the convening of the Adult Strategies Group, made it more feasible and would provide a greater impact for the state if a consortium of co-located institutions was selected instead of five community colleges in disparate locations. Each consortium will work together to eliminate policy barriers within and between their institutions, implement policy changes in line with the MOA-TN Adult Strategies Group and Policy Audit findings, and share results with other institutions in the state and nation.

- **Describe and explain any anticipated or necessary adjustments to the plan moving forward**

While no substantive policy changes are anticipated, a change in funding allocation for the broad grant categories is requested. MOA-TN would like to use the dollars available from the decreased grant director salary and benefits funding to expand funding for the research and travel sections of the budget. The increased funding will cover activities outlined in our grant deliverables document (TN Tracks/ TN Accountability Dashboard Website and Adult Student Initiative annual meetings and site visits, respectively). The distribution of funds has been updated in Tennessee's budget report.

#### Major Changes

- **Describe any major changes or experiences that have had, or will have, an impact on the work supported by the grant.** See changes discussed below.

- **Describe changes occurring within your organization (e.g., team personnel changes) and/or outside your organization that have an impact on the work supported by the grant (e.g., in the community, in your local government, etc.).**

The Governor signed the Complete College Tennessee Act (CCTA) in January 2010. The legislation reinforced many of the statewide efforts underway in relation to MOA. CCTA includes provisions to revise the Master Plan to with an emphasis on economic development, degree production, and institutional mission differentiation. The Act requires an “outcomes-based” funding formula, seamless transfer of a university tract of 60 credit hours, unified community college system, common course numbering at community colleges, pursuit of block scheduling and cohort programming, and an emphasis on STEM at the state’s research universities. CCTA has highlighted higher education productivity among the legislature and media in Tennessee and across the nation.

Tennessee signed on to the Complete College America (CCA) Alliance in March 2010. CCA states pledge to set completion goals, develop action plans and move key policy levers, and collect and report common measures of progress. Tennessee has made progress in each of these areas, and the higher education community continues to work with the Governor’s office on this initiative. CCTA and CCA illustrate Tennessee’s commitment to higher education reform and improved degree completion.

- **Describe how you have responded to or plan to respond to these changes**

CCTA and CCA provide additional opportunities to share the message and grant activities of MOA. The MOA-TN state team and THEC staff have provided information to membership of the special legislative session on education which preceded CCTA and participated in national CCA meetings. MOA-TN will continue to work in concert with these two related initiatives to emphasize the common goal of increasing higher education productivity and degree completion and maintain the commitment of stakeholders.

### **Evaluation**

- **Provide an update on the project evaluation plan outlined in your proposal (hiring evaluator, in-state orientation, SPEC evaluation reflection meeting, submission of baseline data, etc.).**

A state-level evaluator, Christon Arthur, has been hired and has met with the MOA-TN state team and national MOA partners through the SPEC evaluation in-state and national meetings. Dr. Arthur is developing an evaluation plan for the communications portion of the grant, in conjunction with the MOA-TN and TN Business Roundtable. The evaluation plan for the Lumina Adult Student Initiative is in progress in consultation with MOA-TN and the six selected institutions. The MOA-TN core metrics and Tennessee specific metrics were posted to the Knowledge Collaborative May 28.

### **Communication**

- **Provide an update on the project communication plan outlined in your proposal.**

The draft communication plan included in the proposal has been refined to specify six objectives and associated deliverables spanning from March 2010 through December 2010, at which time the communications needs and progress will be reassessed. The objectives include:

1. Input from the business community on the higher education Master Plan,
2. Education of regional stakeholders through localized materials and outreach,
3. Evaluation of state communication plan informed by experts,
4. Business input on ways to facilitate degree completion for the current workforce,
5. Business input on higher education productivity and degree completion efforts, and
6. Development of regional business and higher education coalitions.

Objective one through three are currently underway, as follows from the communications timeline. The contract with the TN Business Roundtable for the Strategic Communications and Engagement work of the grant is in progress.

### **Learning**

- **Describe lessons learned that will help in your continued efforts to achieve your intended goals.**

Our experience has emphasized the importance of several factors in effecting policy change of this magnitude. Progress on the productivity agenda is dependent upon leadership from the Governor's office, legislature, higher education systems, business community, and others. Incentives and consequences must also be present to sustain change across leadership regimes. The codification of the productivity agenda into law has emphasized its importance and provided process goals for the methods needed to reach the state's college attainment goals. The state also needs to refine the availability and linkage of data to measure progress on the agenda and inform action steps.

Tennessee developed a Student Flow Model to provide empirical data for degree completion goals for the state and higher education systems to guide the responsibility of each for the next five years. Through the process of developing the Master Plan and distinctive institutional missions in line with CCTA, it was apparent that institutions also needed guidance in degree completion responsibilities, taking into account each institution's unique role in the state.

- **Describe any changes you have made or plan to make in light of what you have learned.**

More emphasis will be placed on engaging stakeholders to ensure continued understanding of the message and commitment to the productivity agenda through stakeholder retreats and one-on-one seminars with newly elected officials, higher education system leaders, TNBR membership, and editorial boards. The Student Flow Model will also be updated to include institutional specific data in addition to system and state level.

- **If applicable, describe any links you have made or would like to make between this project and other Lumina grants.**

Tennessee has applied for the Lumina Adult Degree Completion Program (ADCP) grant. Tennessee's proposal would establish a statewide ADCP as outlined through the work of the Adult Strategies Group. The TN ADCP would build on the MOA-TN Adult Student Initiative efforts, which will work to identify specific policies or programs that are most cost-effective in increasing degree attainment of adults. The MOA-funded Adult Student Initiative, however, does not provide for large-scale development to significantly increase the state's volume of adult degree completers.

### **Sustainability**

- **Describe the sustainability of the agenda given any potential changes in state leadership.**

The communications plan has several objectives which will aim to provide continued support through changes in legislative and gubernatorial leadership. The TN Business Roundtable will disseminate educational resources to inform a cadre of business leaders and other stakeholders to be champions of the productivity agenda, particularly through the election cycle. In addition, an event will be planned with newly elected leadership from the Governor's office and pertinent House and Senate Committees, building on information they will have received beginning with the transition team. The CCTA also provides a demonstration of continued support as higher education makes required changes over the next several years.